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Briefing Note

Finding Marguerite and Tookoolito: "Mapping Women of the Arctic"

Carol Devine, Tahnee Prior & Gosia Smieszek

Introduction

Maps can beautifully and, at times, wistfully tell us the story of us. However cartography, like history, often overwhelmingly documents the worlds, stories, and accomplishments of men. In these stories, the contributions of women, especially Indigenous women, rarely make it onto the map. This holds true in the Arctic as well. In this commentary, we explore the gendered dimension of map-making, honour the rare yet pivotal examples of female cartography, introduce *Mapping Women of the Arctic* – a way of re-imagining the Arctic through female placenames – and encourage readers to locate and highlight women's contributions to the sciences, arts, policy, culture, diplomacy, history, exploration, and more. Inspired by *Mapping Antarctic Women,* an initiative that (re)maps the continent with female place names and tells the little-known stories of women's contributions to the other pole, *Mapping Women of the Arctic* is a new, crowdsourced map-making initiative that seeks to celebrate and mark the unsung achievements of women in the Arctic.

Mapping the Arctic

As highlighted in this edition of the Arctic Yearbook, mapping informs how we perceive and understand the world, and indeed the Arctic. Historical maps were etched into cave walls, or drawn on paper and animal skins, – "artifacts composed of signs that materialize a way of experiencing" (Geertz, 1976, as cited in Rundstrom, 1990). As such, maps not only represent place or geographic feature names, but also cultural and religious representations, people, animals, objects, nature, and demographic data. They are often also gendered. As is highlighted by Pavlovskaya and Martin (2007),

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> The traditional mapping subject, dominant until recently, is a scientist, cartographer, or GIS expert, a 'disembodied' and, likely, male researcher or professional, in pursuit of objective knowledge, the discovery of the truth, and its accurate graphic representation…Despite the quest for objectivity, the practices and products of this mapping subject have been infused with masculinist privilege (c.f. Rose 1992). What are most often mapped are worlds devoid of women's experiences produced from within professions that are dominated by men.

Arctic maps are unsurprisingly gendered as well. While the area has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia, the most easily accessible maps of the Arctic are overwhelmingly made by men for men, and often non-Indigenous men. In fact, even today, Canadian Geographic's "10 most fascinating maps of the Arctic" were all developed by Western men.[1]

Early maps of the Arctic were developed by European men, such as Flemish Mercator's full map of the Arctic in 1569. Later maps of the Arctic, such as John Hugh Johnson's "*The Arctic regions, showing the North-West Passage as determined by Cap. R. McClure and other Arctic voyagers*" (1856), go beyond documenting exploratory voyages to feature people, nature, and the environment (Gapp, 2021). Still, maps such as Johnson's often centre traditionally male-centric and colonial worldviews of exploration and conquest, whereby a "settler-colonial construct of the Arctic manifests itself in cartographic lines and scenes of domination and expansion" to subsume a local Inuit geography by, among other things, visualizing local wildlife as a tool in the imperial project (Gapp, 2021) – the map is framed with drawings of walruses, igloo-building, and an "Esquimaux Female." This form of mapmaking stems from a "heroic tradition" where polar exploration serves as a "proving ground for colonial masculinity, places considered by men to be far too dangerous to bring women" (Rosner, 2009) (although, this does not necessarily mean that women actively chose to stay away). Often, it is imaginaries, like this, that shape our understanding of what the Arctic is.

Mapping Polar Women

Feminist cartography, in contrast, is defined by its adoption of "an epistemology of embodiment," including an acknowledgment of different relationships, modes of production, and cartographic media (Huffman, 1997: 267 in Pirani et al., 2019). As such, it often recognizes and redresses the exclusion of women from map-making by profiling and visualizing previously supressed and/or varied views on the meaning, construct, and utility of place. However, female cartographers, like many Indigenous cartographers[2], largely remain unknown and marginalized globally. In fact, in 2019, of the 200 Wikipedia profiles of cartographers only two were women (Llamas-Owens, 2020).[3,4] And yet women *have* contributed to map-making throughout history, as they have to exploration, policy, culture, education, diplomacy, the arts, science, and more. This holds true in the Arctic and Antarctic, alike. For instance, Russia's State Oceanographic Institute encouraged women to participate in its work as early as the 1920s, and in 1933, renowned Russian marine geologist Maria Klenova produced the first seabed map of the Barents Sea.[5] She also contributed to the first Soviet Atlas of Antarctica.

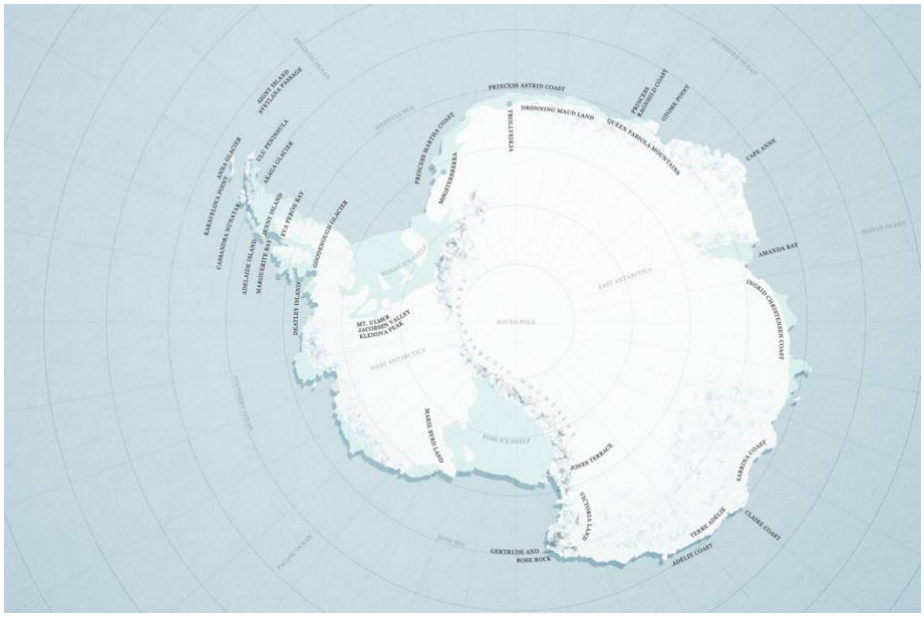
Marie Klenova

Source: Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of Russian Academy of Sciences (photographer, and date unknown)

Seeking to (re-)map Antarctica with female place names, and to highlight the contributions of women, such as Klenova, Carol Devine (co-author to this commentary) has spent the past decades developing an interactive and collaborative project, titled *Mapping Antarctic Women*. As Devine and other scholars have learned through their respective work, prior to the mid-19th century, those Antarctic place names were chosen by men for women left behind – daughters, wives (Adèlie Coast, Marie Byrd Land), patrons (Queen Elizabeth Land, Queen Maud Land) and pioneers (Cosmonette Glacier named for the first woman cosmonaut). As the ban for women to go to Antarctica was eventually lifted by male gatekeepers (including explorers, scientific institutions, and governments), female place names were increasingly mapped by women explorers and scientists, expedition members, and those working in situ. Each place, named by or for a woman, tells an inspiring multi-layered story. The Ronne Filscher Ice Shelf in the Pensacola Mountains (originally named Edith Ronne Land) was named after Edith "Jackie" Ronne, the first woman to overwinter in Antarctica and the first woman to work on land on an Antarctic expedition. From 1946-48, she traveled to the continent with her expedition leader husband, yet it was she who was the ground breaker (and expedition leader) in her own right.[6] Plumbstead Valley is the namesake of South African palaeobotanist, Dr. Edna Plumbstead, for her work on Glossopteris fossils. And Tilav Cirque honours female Turkish astrophysicist Serap Tilav. Maria Klenova's namesake is Klenova Peak, rising 2300m in the Sentinel Range, Ellsworth Mountains.

Devine's map of Antarctic women was born, unwittingly, in 1995. She was in Antarctica leading the first environmental clean-up expedition, a collaboration between The VIEW, a Canadian Foundation, and a Russian Antarctic Expedition. Devine was sitting in the office of research station manager Sergey Potapov discussing the joint ecological project when he said: "You're the first woman here in over 20 years, there are few women in the Antarctic." As he spoke, Devine remembers looking at a map on his wall: Marguerite Bay. "So, Marguerite was here before me. Who was she?" Devine promised herself she would find out.

Years later she started to (re)make the map of Antarctica with all female place names. Of course, she mapped Marguerite Bay, the placename for French Explorer Jean-Baptiste Charcot's second wife. Today, the illustrated map shows but a few dozen of the over 350 place names honouring women, which Devine continues to collect.[7] Her map is a bid to celebrate the vital roles women have played in shaping our knowledge of the Antarctic, shining a light on female place names, and sharing the little-known stories of women's presence and contributions to our knowledge of this frozen continent, important for regulating the world's temperatures.



Mapping Antarctic Women: Appearances and Disappearances

Sample of a crowd-mapped (re)map of female places names in Antarctica.

Carol Devine, Illustrator: Aidan Meighan, appeared in Ernest Journal, 2018 ernestjournal.co.uk

In telling the unknown or little-known stories of Antarctic women we both learn and share science, history, geography, ethnography, anthropology and much more; and the stories of the barriers women faced and tackled, their explorations, discoveries – inner and outer. The adage rings true about the need for role models and women's visibility, "you need to see it to be it."

Throughout her work on *Mapping Antarctic Women,* Devine inevitably wondered about the Arctic context. In her initial search for female place names in the Arctic, she researched and recorded stories of notable (in the broadest sense) women of the Arctic, to see whether there are place names attributable to them. Queen Victoria was honoured, sharing a mapped colonial narrative at both poles. In the Arctic, Victoria Island, Kitlineq – the eighth largest island in the world and Canada's second largest island – was named by fur traders and explorers, Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson, who followed its southeast coast in 1839. In Antarctica, Victoria Island is found on the western side of Antarctica, fronting the Ross Sea and the Ross Ice Shelf, and discovered by British Captain James Clark Ross in 1841.

Determined to locate Indigenous female place names, Devine came across the work of geography and polar studies scholar Morgan Seag, whose research on the formal exclusion of women in polar science until the 20th century – although "women contributed, and some had substantial influence in polar science as early as the mid-19th century" (Seag, 2019; see also Herbert, 2012) – found

that, of course, "Indigenous women had been involved in Arctic knowledge-making and travel long before the arrival of Western explorers…From the 19th century, Indigenous women's knowledge and skills were assets to some expeditions originating in Europe and North America." (Seag, 2019). As an example, Seag's work references Tookoolito who, together with her husband Ipiirvik, was a guide and translator for Arctic expeditions in the 1860s and 70s. Tookoolito and Ipiirvik (nicknamed Hannah and Joe, respectively) not only made notable contributions in the search for the lost Franklin expedition and the Polaris North Pole expedition, they were exploited and exhibited at sideshows and museums in Europe and the US, and additionally suffered the loss of their children. Scouring maps, Devine was keen to find Tookoolito's place name – ᑕᖅᑯᓕᑐᖅ in Inuktitut (and Taqulittuq in Roman orthography) – certain that she had one. There she was: Tookoolito Inlet, located on Cornelius Grinnell Bay in Nunavut. Her name also appears as Hannah Island in Greenland.

A more recent example of a notable woman of the Arctic – and one without a place name, to date – is Rebecca Hainnu, Inuk translator, writer, and the principal of Quluaq School in Clyde River, Baffin Island, Nunavut, where she is an advocate for her student population (of some 340). In 2018, she was selected as one of Canada's 40 outstanding principals by the Learning Partnership. Hainnu is also "recognized in her own community, region, territory and beyond, as a phenomenal, outstanding educator" (Bell, 2018). And in addition to this work, she has written two books, *The Spirit of the Sea* and *A Walk on the Tundra* (co-authored with Anna Ziegler), a finalist for the Canadian Children's Literature Round Table Information Book award in 2012. Like Tookoolito, Rebecca Hainnu and many other women of the Arctic deserve recognition, and perhaps even to be mapped.

Moving forward: Nominating Women of the Arctic

Together with Finland-based non-profit association *Women of the Arctic* (www.genderisnotplanb.com), Carol Devine is now developing a prototype mapping project to spotlight the stories and geolocations of women of the Arctic from all walks of life. Inspired by Devine's experiences and efforts to (re-)map women's stories through female place names and toponymies in Antarctica, *Mapping Women of the Arctic* is an attempt to redress this structural imbalance, to honour their contributions and tell their stories. This includes short profiles of women – who live in, work on, or engage with the Arctic – geolocated based on where they have spent an important part of their lives. Among other things, the project and map seek to challenge "what makes a person notable" – the Wikipedia criteria vein and the pervasive heroic male narrative of the Arctic.

Devine presented the initial concept of this project at the Gender in Polar Research workshop of the 2020 Arctic Science Summit Week. Not only did workshop presenters share the contributions of remarkable individuals to Arctic research, but discussions and participant feedback reinforced and elaborated that nominations of the persons to be mapped include non-binary, transgender, intersex and gender queer identifying individuals (Fattah et al., 2019); and the need to interrogate not only the sexism that dominates Arctic history, research, exploration (and mapmaking) but also heterosexism and the exclusion of the experiences of those with an identity outside of the pervasive gender binary. Building on this feedback, and inspired by the Indigenous digital mapmaking of Inuit women and men,[8] the map will crowdsource nominations of remarkable women, non-binary, and genderqueer identifying individuals across the circumpolar North. As

such, the map of women of the Arctic will coalesce and visualize missing data, include important information relating to geographic features, as well as topographical and cultural references.

Want to nominate a notable woman of the Arctic?

Fill in and submit your nomination form at: www.genderisnotplanb.com/mapping-arctic-women.

Notes

1. See 10 fascinating historic maps of the Arctic. (2016, June 27). Canadian Geographic. https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/10-fascinating-historic-maps-arctic.
2. Nevertheless, approaches to Arctic cartography exist, as well. Lesser unknown, yet ingenious maps made by Inuit in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) are carved, wooden portable maps–3D hand-held maps that "represent coastlines in a continuous line, up one side of the wood and down the other." These Ammassalik maps aided in navigation on water at night, and are an example of Inuit innovation, including in cartography. The gender of these cartographers remains unknown to the authors. See Inuit Cartography. (2017, February 2). The Decolonial Atlas. https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2016/04/12/inuit-cartography.
3. https://futuremaps.com/blogs/news/the-women-who-shaped-the-world
4. To redress the gender disparity in Wikipedia, where by August 23, 2021 only 19.05% biographic entries were of women (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Red), an Antarctic "Wikibomb" (https://www.scar.org/antarctic-women/) in 2016 of voluntary editors, including Carol Devine and female polar scientists themselves, improved and created over 100 biographies of women in Antarctic science.
5. A bathymetric map of the Barents Sea (Klenova 1948). Access at: https://blogs.egu.eu/divisions/ts/2020/12/21/maria-vasilyevna-klenova-12-august-1898-6-august-1976-the-mother-of-marine-geology/.
6. Antarctic Pioneer: A life of Jackie Ronne by Joanna Kafarowski will be published in 2022 by Dundurn Press.
7. To check the database or to share a name or story, contact Carol Devine (carol@caroldevine.org).
8. Mapping is increasingly also digitized, combining new technologies, like satellites, with ancient practices, such as storytelling such as the Inuit Heritage Trust's Nunavut Place Names Program[‡], a digital map populated by Inuit elders and community members. Similarly, the Exchange for Local Observations and Knowledge of the Arctic (ELOKA) includes a Yup'ik Environmental Knowledge Project working with Elders from Bering Sea coastal communities in Alaska to document Yup'ik place names.

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